

SECO Safety and Environmental Compliance Office



Take care of the earth and she will take care of you.

~Author Unknown

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Professional Development Conference

NOAA Safety Staff from SECO and NMFS attended the annual American Society of Safety Engineers Professional Development Conference held in Seattle during June. The week long conference was the best attended safety and environmental conference in the history of the ASSE. Attendees included Fred Fanning, DOC Safety Manager, Tom Altwater, Ron Mattox, Ben Bond and Rhonda Carpenter from SECO; and Thea Smith and Ann Byer from NMFS. The purpose of attending was threefold: 1) to maintain professional quality through attending numerous courses, 2) gain certification points and 3) maintain and develop lasting professional relationships. The highlight of the week was when Joe Duran and his wife hosted a wonderful barbeque of Copper River Salmon at their home one evening.

In addition to this program, the SECO team also participated in Seattle's Safety Day activities held on June 15 followed by a complete safety tour of the Sand Point facilities.

Safety Day at Silver Spring Campus

On June 20th, NOAA's Silver Spring Campus conducted their annual health and safety day. This year's theme was, "Making NOAA a Safer Place."

Safety Day activities were hosted by the NOAA Safety & Environmental Compliance Office (SECO) in partnership with the Silver Spring campus health unit.

Over 35 commercial vendors participated ranging from, local hospitals, medical insurance companies, medical and health care providers, and Montgomery County Government Recycling. On-site medical screening and testing were done for blood pressure, spinal alignment, osteoporosis, and hearing. Consultation services were available providing information on diabetes, cancer warning signs and treatment, hypertension, as well as other health areas.

All of NOAA's line offices participated utilizing a wide variety of exhibits and information tables. The National Weather Service provided a large flat screen TV showing real time

weather radar data during the safety day as well as severe weather safety information. The Department of Commerce Safety Office provided a "Bacteria Detection Machine," which everyone found very interesting. OSHA personnel provided safety regulation information. SECO demonstrated an ergonomically correct work station.

Approximately 500 NOAA personnel attended the five hour event. There were hourly door prizes which even included a \$25.00 gas card. Local vendors provided food and coffee for the safety day personnel.

A major highlight of the safety day's activities was the many appearances of the new NOAA safety mascot, "Safety Seagull." Not confining his activities to the NOAA Safety Day location, "Safety" made several appearances campus-wide, putting out the "Safety Word."

Plans are already underway for a bigger and better NOAA "Health & Safety Day - 2007."



BY FIONA MACRAE

Wash your hands, caller. Your mobile's dirtier than you think



Your mobile phone could be a major health hazard, research shows. The phones, an essential part of everyday life for 55million Britons, are crawling with potentially lethal bacteria. With tens of thousands of microbes living on each square inch, they harbour more bacteria than a lavatory seat, the sole of a shoe or a door handle. Microbiologists say the combination of constant handling and the heat generated by the phones creates a prime breeding ground for all sorts of bugs that are normally found on our skin.

They include Staphylococcus aureus, which can cause ill-

nesses from pimples and boils to pneumonia and meningitis and is a close relative of the superbug MRSA.

Joanna Verran, professor of microbiology at Manchester Metropolitan University, said: "Mobile phones are stored in bags or pockets, are handled frequently and held close to the face.

"In other words, they come into contact with more parts of our body and a wider range of bacteria than toilet seats. The phones contained more skin bacteria than any other object. This could be due to the fact

that this type of bacteria increase in high temperatures and our phones are perfect for breeding these germs as they are kept warm and cozy in pockets, handbags and briefcases."

Mobile firm Dial-a-Phone advised owners to use antibacterial wipes to keep their handsets germ-free.

Daily Mail

1st August 2006

Safety Soapbox Absolute Shocker of the Week

This week's commentary is courtesy of the subscriber who sent us the picture.

How to trim a dead branch...

"Have one worker climb tree and wait for the others to get him a rope. Then climb 3 meters up a ladder to throw a rope up to the worker in tree. Let go of the ladder with one hand and throw the rope upward as hard as you can, taking 4 or 5 tries to get it up the tree.

Once the first worker has reached out and caught the flying rope, have him hoist up a chain saw to trim the dead branch. Use 10 mm unrated braided plastic poly rope tied around his waist as a safety harness. (Difficult to see in the photo - yellow rope is worker's "harness" and the red rope is for lifting up the chain saw.)

Why lean the ladder against the tree when you can use this more novel and exciting approach? Thankfully, all four tree trimmers survived without injury - this time."



Picture This!

Absolute Shocker of the Week is published by WorkSafe Victoria's Construction & Utilities Program in the interests of promoting safer work practices. It may be freely copied. To receive our free weekly emailed newsletter, Safety Soapbox, simply email construction@workcover.vic.gov.au and provide your name, organization, position, telephone contact and preferred mail address. WorkSafe Victoria is a division of the Victorian WorkCover Authority.

Safety Tips for Walkers and Joggers:

- Know where you are running/hiking and where help can be accessed.
- Know your start and end points and the precise path you are taking before you depart.
- Tell a friend or family member where you are running/hiking, the path you expect to take and how long you expect to be.
- Always keep your eyes up - don't look at the ground. If you are passing someone, make eye contact and stay confident.
- Always walk or jog against traffic, so you can always see what is coming.
- Listen to what is going on around you - listening to music can not only be distracting, but takes away one of your most valuable defenses.
- Don't go off the beaten path. While it can be invigorating to explore off the beaten path, try to do that when you are with a "buddy" or friend. Don't explore unknown territory on your own. Also, parks or marked paths will often have rangers or other hikers/runners on them, and that provides another line of security.
- Take a cell phone and whistle with you. These can be used to hail for help if you need it.



Helpful Tips to Ease Eye Strain

Some folks have inquired about what they can do to help relieve and prevent eye strain from computer use. Here are some helpful suggestions.



For workers who spend most of the day in front of a computer screen, several key factors can cause eyes to work harder than necessary. Here are some basic tips courtesy of 3M for minimizing eye strain and maintaining your vision.

- Get regular eye exams, and wear corrective lenses if necessary. (Be sure to tell your eye specialist that you use a computer at work.)
- Add an AOA-approved anti-glare computer filter to your monitor.
- Blink frequently to help keep eyes moist, particularly if you wear contact lenses.
- Occasionally cup your hands over closed eyes for 30 seconds to 60 seconds and take deep, slow breaths to relax.
- Adjust your monitor distance. Position your monitor at least 18 inches from your eyes.
- Adjust monitor angle to reduce reflective glare. Straight up and down is best. Use document holders that attach to the sides of the monitor, and angle them accordingly.
- Adjust your monitor height. A good guideline is to arrange the monitor so that when sitting relaxed, you can look over the top of the monitor.
- Use polarizing task lights to light your tasks, not your computer monitor.
- If feasible, install lower-watt overhead light bulbs or polarizing light filters to reduce room lighting levels.
- Relocate your computer monitor from in front of windows and bright light sources.
- Use drapes, shades and blinds.
- Clean the screen. Staring through dust, dirt and fingerprints on your computer screen makes the image more difficult to see.

These tips originally appeared in Occupational Health & Safety News, one of several print newsletters offered by Stevens Publishing.

NECSAS tier 2 assessments produce results.



In April 2006, NOAA's Safety and Environmental Compliance Office's (SECO) two person team from Kansas City MO found bullets impacting on NOAA Weather Service's (NWS) Miami Weather Forecast Office (WFO) while conducting a site assessment. These assessments are conducted by SECO to help improve safety and environmental compliance across NOAA. This particular visit to the remote radar site, discovered bullets from a Federal Bureau of Prisons firing range had been landing around the radar site for several years.

Bullets were found over the entire length of the road into the site. Needless to say, the assessors had an immediate concern a NOAA employee might be hit by a stray bullet, and a long term concern the lead bullets might create a lead contamination problem for NOAA. The local staff indicated they had been raising their concerns to the Federal Bureau of Prisons for years, but they were unable to solve the problem.

The SECO team gathered the relevant information, took pictures and indicated to the manager in charge they would work to solve this lingering problem for him. The SECO team contacted their management, the regional NWS management in Ft. Worth TX, and the management of the Prison. Their objective was to notify all those within NOAA/ NWS about the immediate problem so they could assist the local WFO in finding a remedy as soon as possible. After discussions with management, the SECO team worked with NOAA General Council and the NWS Regional Deputy to officially notify the Bureau of Prisons Regional Deputy of the situation. The Prison management agreed that the situation was urgent and shut down the firing range. The range remains closed pending an investigation of the cause of the bullets landing on NWS property.

If you find yourself in a situation where you are unable to solve the environmental or safety problem, consider following the actions of the Miami WFO and ask SECO for help.

For more info/questions, call Andy Poppen, 816.426.7814.



Mr. Thomas Altwater, NOAA Safety Chief meets Mr. Ed Foulke Jr. (center), the newly appointed Assistant Secretary and Director of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

Mr. Altwater attended a meeting with other representatives from various federal agencies as he represents NOAA at the OSHA Federal Young Workers Committee. The meeting took place in the offices of former President (LBJ) Johnson.

Driving in the Rain



Rain and wet roads can mean driving trouble. On a wet road you can't stop, accelerate or turn as well because your tire to road traction isn't as good as on dry roads. If your tires don't have much tread left, you'll get even less traction.

It's always wise to go slower and be cautious if it starts to rain while you are driving. The surface may get wet suddenly when your reflexes are tuned for driving on dry pavement.

The heavier the rain, the harder it is to see. Even if your windshield wiper blades are good shape, a heavy rain can make it harder to see road signs and traffic signals, pavement markings, the edge of the road, and even people walking. Road spray can often be worse for vision than rain, especially if it comes from a dirty road.

So it is wise to keep your wiping equipment in good shape and keep your windshield washer tank filled. Keep your windows clean inside. This will make them less likely to fog up. Replace your windshield wiper inserts when they show signs of streaking or missing areas on the windshield, or when strips of rubber start to separate from the inserts.

Driving too fast through large water puddles, or even going through some car washes, can cause problems too. The water may affect your brakes. Try to avoid puddles, but if you can't, try to slow down before you hit them.

Hydroplaning

Hydroplaning is dangerous. So much water can build up under your tires that your vehicle can actually ride on the water. This can happen if the road is wet enough and you are going fast enough. When your vehicle is hydroplaning, it has little or no contact with the road.

You might not be aware of hydroplaning. You could drive along for some time without realizing your tires aren't in constant contact with the road. You could find out the hard way; when you have to slow, turn, move out to pass - or if you get hit by a gust of wind. You could suddenly find yourself out of control.

Hydroplaning doesn't happen often. But it can if your tires haven't much tread or if the pressure in one or more is low. It can happen if a lot of water is standing on the road. If you can see reflections from trees, telephone poles, or other vehicles and raindrops "dimple" the water's surface, there could be hydroplaning. Hydroplaning usually happens on higher speed roads. There just isn't a hard and fast rule about hydroplaning.

The best advice is to slow down when it is raining, and be careful.

Some Other Rainy Weather Tips

- Turn on your headlights -- not just your parking lights -- to help make you more visible to others.
- Look for hard-to-see vehicles coming from behind. What you see through the rearview mirrors may be distorted by raindrops on the outside mirror and rear window. You may want to use your headlights even in daytime if it's raining hard.
- Besides slowing down, allow some extra following distance. And be especially careful when you pass another vehicle. Allow yourself more clear room ahead, and be prepared to have your view restricted by road spray. If the road spray is so heavy you are actually blinded, drop back. Don't pass until conditions improve. Going more slowly is better than having an accident.
- Use your defogger if it helps.
- Have good tires with proper tread depth.

Courtesy of General Motors Corporation

ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

This newsletter is brought to you by the staff of the Safety and Environmental Compliance Office (SECO). The issues will be produced on a quarterly basis and posted on <http://www.seco.noaa.gov/> to help increase awareness of the environmental, safety and health programs. If you have any questions or comments, please contact SECO at (301)713-2870.